

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

The paragraph beginning at page 7, line 22 and ending at page 8, line 7 has been amended to read as follows:

A1  
The shape of a boat serving as a holding tool will be described with reference to Figs. 3 and 4. Fig. 3 shows a wafer boat (i.e., wafer boat 8) applied to this embodiment. Four columns 11 symmetrically stand on a ring-shaped bottom plate 10. A ring-shaped plate 12 is fixed on the upper ends of the columns 11. Each column 11 has a circular section. A number of wafer loading grooves 13 are formed in the vertical direction at a predetermined pitch in each column 11 on a side opposing the central axis of the wafer boat 8. Wafers are inserted into the grooves 13 of the four columns 11 and supported by a wafer boat 8 at the four groove portions.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows. Note that all claims currently pending in this application including those presently being amended, have been reproduced below for the Examiners convenience. A marked-up copy showing the changes made to the claims is attached as an appendix.

A2  
1. (Amended) An annealing method of annealing an SOI substrate in a reducing atmosphere, comprising the step of:

holding the SOI substrate by a holding portion having a surface formed from silicon and annealing the SOI substrate, wherein the holding portion is a member having a silicon film thereon or a member formed from single-crystal silicon or polysilicon.